You Deserve Something Good by brokenpromisesandhope

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Summary:

Both Steve and Jonathan are abused by their fathers, Kali and Nancy try to help.

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Author's Note:

Hey friends so this started as some abuse headcanons and developed into a fic, hence why it's written in bullet points but I think it's easy enough to read. If I missed any warnings please let me know but I don't feel it's that graphic, however I will put warnings of specific violent acts and who is murdered in the end notes.
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- ○ Kali notices first, of course she does. With all the torture she'd went through, which boils down to abuse if you wanna downplay it, she recognizes the signs.
- ○ Steve is a bit better at hiding it, she meets him first of course because it's just him and Nancy together at first, though Jonathan is always kind of hanging around.
- ○ Anyway, at first she just thinks Steve is obnoxious as shit, then she realizes. He's purposefully loud. He messes with his hair and is loud and flailing around like he can't control it. Like he's trying to get all his pent up energy out before he has to go home. He winces when he moves sometimes, but Nancy doesn't seem to notice. He avoids talking about his family, always tries to convince Nancy to let him come over, everyday of the week. When that doesn't work, he asks Jonathan, who always denies him. Finally Kali says he can come over to her place and he stares at her in shock. Then asks Nancy if that's okay. Which is hilarious because Kali's mind is a constant stream of *NancyNancyNancy,* and yes she likes Steve and he's attractive but she's had half a dozen Steve's (she's been on the street since she was thirteen okay) but she's never been with a *Nancy*.
- ○ So anyway, she knows. It's too obvious. The way he all but throws himself on the ground at baseball practice, probably as an excuse for his bruises. She knows Nancy

has to have seen him naked, the way he looks at her, they have to be fucking. Kali is not at all jealous.

- Jonathan it's a bit easier. He's quiet, reserved, always wearing long sleeves and not talking out of turn. He's an easy target for the kids at school, and she's sure it's no different when he's at home. She sees him with a black eye several times, but she doesn't exactly believe that it was the asshole kids in his homeroom for some reason.
- Nancy frets over him. Steve too. It's so interesting to watch. How Nancy will be sitting in Steve's lap, but leaned over, giving Jonathan total access to stare down her v-neck shirt (he doesn't of course, it's fucking Jonathan) as she brushes his hair out his eyes and gives him an ice pack, or a hand to hold as she cleans the cut on his nose, Steve's hand on her thigh the whole time.
- Kali wonders how the three of them don't notice. Each of them staring at each other with love and adoration. She knows Nancy's not stupid. She's the one allowed in Nancy's house most often because her parents are sexist dicks, even though if Kali wanted she could have Nancy the same way Steve does. The way Jonathan wants to. And it's not until they get to Nancy's one afternoon and Nancy's changing into some more comfortable clothes that Kali sees the self inflicted scars on her thigh and she realizes. She doesn't stare. Nancy doesn't see her looking either and she breathes a sigh of relief before blurting out, "I think Steve's dad beats the shit out of him too."
- Nancy's eyes widen and she drops the pair of sweatpants she was pulling on, voice trembling like she'd been suspecting it for awhile, and she looks up at Kali with those wide blue eyes, already filling with tears, "What?" She croaks. And Kali tells her, the signs, the parallels to her story, and she catches Nancy as her legs crumple beneath her. She kicks the sweatpants off her legs and curls into Kali's lap and just sobs, finally getting out, "Jonathan too," And Kali nods, presses her lips against her forehead and says, "I know."
- It takes a lot for Nancy to get up. Kali's legs have already went numb, not because Nancy's heavy of course. The girl is too thin. But because it's been so long. Finally she

gets up and stands in front of Kali, in just her pale pink underwear, and Kali can't pretend she hasn't seen the scars now. Not when Nancy reaches down to pull her up and catches her looking. Nancy blushes, face red and tries to stutter out an excuse but Kali doesn't say anything because it's not her place. It's not her place. No matter how much she wants to kiss Nancy and tell her she's beautiful. That she's been there. That she needs to eat. Deserves to eat. Deserves to love herself. She has no doubt Steve tells her all these things too. That Jonathan would if he knew. She wouldn't be surprised if she rolled up Jonathan's sleeves and found the same fucking thing. But it's not her place.

- ○ She loves them. All. So goddamn much.
- ○ So Nancy changes her mind, pulls on leggings and one of Steve's sweatshirts. Offers Kali the same, but Kali thinks she just wants to see her slide out of her skin tight jeans, because she sure stares, as Kali stretches out her leggings with her wider thighs, hips and ass, and picks out one of Nancy's shirts instead, that shows off the deep v of cleavage and chooses one of Steve's zip up sweatshirts instead, zipping it half way, "Do I look okay?" Kali asks, flipping her hair over her shoulder, knowing exactly what she's doing. "Mhm." Nancy says.
- ○ The probability of Steve's parents being home are slim, so Nancy drives out to the Byers' first, music is playing in the background but otherwise it's silent. Nancy's eyes are narrowed and focused on the road but she's tense, "You don't wanna ask?" She grits out finally, voice a bit raw from all the sobbing.
- ○ "Do you wanna tell me?" Kali counters. Nancy glances over at her. "I don't even have real problems," Nancy says, "Not like Steve and Jonathan." Her voice cracks and Kali wants to argue. She's seen the Wheeler's house. Everything always in perfect order all the time. Mrs. Wheeler, looking even skinnier than Nancy most days, in an extremely unhealthy way. The dark circles under Nancy's eyes that even her $50 concealer couldn't cover because Holly was sick and Nancy had been up with her all night, three nights in a row, her parents literally at a

hotel because they needed sleep. The way her father listened too closely about Steve, and was too adamant about him never entering her room. She figured that Nancy had a lot more “real” problems than she thought. But it wasn’t Kali’s place, so she just puts a hand on Nancy’s thigh and squeezes, “Anytime you wanna talk about it, I’m here.”

- She doesn’t expect Nancy to bring it up, but she’s gonna watch. She wonders why she couldn’t tell before, tell her aura was off or smell the hurt and pain coming from her. She realizes she hasn’t been paying attention to that side of Nancy. She’d been paying attention to Nancy’s slightly crooked eyeliner, trying to figure out how to make her laugh so hard she had to cover her mouth, tried to figure out which of her lipstick’s was Kali’s favorite, the probability that Nancy even know what *polyamorous* was, how she fit her ass into those tight ass jeans. She’d been doing the same thing almost everyone in Nancy’s life, tried to figure out how to get into her pants and into her heart, without actually seeing what was right there. It makes Kali feel a bit sick and she must make a face because the next thing she knows Nancy’s hand is over hers and she squeezes, “I know but it’ll be okay. They’re both really strong.” Kali takes her hand off Nancy’s thigh and leans closer to the window.
- When they get to the door, it’s Will who answers. He’s getting taller, still quite a bit shorter than Mike, but almost as tall as Nancy. He looks tired and he has a busted lip and Kali shoots out to put a hand on Nancy’s shoulder and pushes out, *calm, calm, calm,* before she bursts into tears. Will smiles, and so does Nancy, “Come here sweetie,” she says, and gives him a tight hug. Kali moves her hand down to Nancy’s upper back and tries harder, her temple sweating, because Nancy’s lower lip is trembling. “Is your brother home?” She asks. “Yeah, he’s in his room.” “Is it just you two tonight?” Nancy asks.
- “No, mom’s in the room. Dad’s um, he’s working.” His voice trembles a bit and he is too young for this. Nancy’s sadness is creeping up again and Kali plants her feet and tries and finally, Nancy is standing up straighter, “I’m

gonna go see Jonathan," And leaves Kali with the kid. She tries to hide the fact that she's panting, out of breath, head spinning because she's not getting enough air, but that's not important, not now. She reaches out a hand to Will. He shakes it and smiles as she introduces herself, pushing out, *calm, healing, hope, happiness.* When she lets go he looks at her curiously, before grabbing a fistful of tissues and handing them to her. "Your nose is bleeding." she takes the Kleenex, "Thanks."

- Nancy's on Jonathan's bed, fingers tracing underneath his fresh black eye. Kali's given her enough that she's not crying, just looking like a kicked puppy. "Jonathan," she hisses. "Please don't Nance, I can't," his voice sounds on the verge of breaking, "I just can't." Nancy nods and moves to give him a hug, to which he winces. She moves away and he quickly smiles, but Kali shakes her head.
- "Stand up and take off your shirt," she says. Jonathan shakes his head but Kali just waits. Nancy stares, biting her precious nails, and Jonathan moves to Kali, "Do I have to? I'm fine, really, I just," Kali nods and Jonathan slowly peels off his shirt. Kali knows broken ribs when she sees them. There's bruising everywhere. All in different stages of healing. There's self inflicted cigarette burns on his inner wrist, a mattering of scars on the other. Some sort of indent that was probably made with a blunt object near his hip. Missing a divot of skin because it probably never healed properly.
- Kali wants to reach out and touch it but it's not her place, so she clears her throat, "Your ribs are broken. You're on bedrest. We will get something to wrap them up. But you're getting out of here. For tonight at least. We're going to Steve's." "I don't," he turns to Nancy but she gets up and runs to the bathroom. They both hear her throwing up. Jonathan turns to go help her and Kali sees the permanent welt on his back. It's discolored, goes from the bottom of his back dimple and crisscrosses above, ending at his kidney. Kali swallows heavily. Does not pity him because that's not what he needs or wants. Instead she goes to his dresser and finds the softest sweater she can, that mustard yellow thing she's seen a

few times and helps him put it on. “I have some weed if you wanna bring your pipe.” Jonathan’s lips curl slightly and he smiles. Nancy comes out of the bathroom, hair in a knot at the base of her neck, she spits a mouthful of mouthwash in the sink and turns to them, “Yes, I wanna be high.” “Your wish is my command, my lady,” Jonathan teases, pushing his hair out of his face with his sweater covered hand, and Nancy runs a hand down his chest softly, “my favorite sweater.” He looks at both of them and then smiles and heads to get his pipe.

- ○ Kali sits in the back with Jonathan as Nancy drives to Steve’s. She can feel his eyes on her every once in awhile and finally she reaches over and grabs his hand. She can see his blush and she uses her thumb to trace the vein on the back of his hand.
- ○ Steve’s parents aren’t home, thank god. He’s a bit shocked to see them, but that changes immediately when he leans down to kiss Nancy and pull the others in. He’s wearing a long sleeve henley and plaid pajama bottoms and Kali can’t help but smile as he encourages her to do shots with him. She gets it, she does, drinking and smoking the pain away, so she wouldn’t be surprised if his dad also was drinking. But he just gets more loud, looser as it goes on. Less fake, less forced. He barely moves from where he’s laying on Nancy’s chest, except to lean close and *scream* in Kali’s face when she says she doesn’t think Brad Pitt is that hot. Or lean close and beg Jonathan to let him smoke.
- ○ Finally Jonathan packs the pipe and flicks his lighter, and they smoke. Kali never took Nancy as a smoker, she’s smoked with Jonathan before of course, and Steve’s a token party boy so of course, but Jonathan passes her the pipe and lighter without a second thought and she takes a perfect hit. “Color me impressed,” says Kali, voice deeper with the liquor she’d already drunk. “Bite me,” Nancy says passing the pipe to Steve and Kali says, “Anytime babe,” and Nancy blushes as her eyes get heavy.
- ○ The weed calms everyone down. It makes everyone tired and relaxed and somehow Steve gets more tangled up in

Nancy, and Nancy makes grabby hands for Kali, and places her feet in Jonathan's lap, pulling him close so both her and Steve can cuddle on him. Kali moves closer to her, the weed clouding her mind as Nancy rests her head on her chest, the weight making it a bit hard to breathe, mango smelling hair ticking the skin of her chest and her neck. It's too good. She could get used to this. Especially when Nancy whispers, "I love you all so much." And it doesn't even sound like a lie.

- Things change a bit after that. Kali doesn't know what Nancy told Steve of course, if she told him that she knows or what, but he tones it down. He's less stressed and wired. Somedays he's still out of control, shouting and talking with his hands, kissing Nancy in a way that is too inappropriate for school, even if Jonathan and Kali stare at them unashamed. But finally Nancy will pull away, lips cherry red and face flushed, hair messed up, and she runs her hands down Steve's face softly, boops his nose, "Not now," she'll say. He'll slide close, pull her practically in her lap, though the lunch table is preventing that, bury his face in her neck and stay like that for the rest of the conversation. Nancy will hold his hand, and continue talking like she doesn't have a 6'1 baseball player wrapped around her waist. Somedays he's quiet, doesn't say anything. Doesn't eat. Even when Nancy nudges him or holds out his fork. Once, Jonathan hands him half of his sandwich. It's not even a particularly good sandwich. Wonderbread, miracle whip because Jonathan hated mayo and turkey. Nancy's all but begging him, trying not to cause a scene but being slightly hysterical, Steve just not giving a shit and Jonathan holds out part of his sandwich. To everyone's surprise Steve takes it, and takes a small bite. Jonathan gives him a small smile even though he's blushing and Steve eats the entire thing. Nancy breathes out a sigh of relief and the next day she brings a batch of homemade brownies the next day and makes sure Jonathan eats them.
- Kali shouldn't be surprised when Jonathan kisses her in his car. Nancy was busy babysitting Holly and Steve had

baseball practice and Jonathan understandably didn't want to go home. He drives out to the river and packs his pipe and they smoke and blast music. She's just said something and he doesn't answer and she turns to ask him again and he leans in and kisses her. It's soft and sweet just like Jonathan and she moans into his mouth as he pulls her in tighter. Before she knows it she's in his lap and both their shirts are off. She's distracted for a moment, focus on helping him get her pants unbuttoned. She's got her leggings shoved down her thighs, underwear too and she's working on Jonathan's when she runs her free hand over his bare chest. It's smooth except for the burn mark on his chest, almost right over his heart. It doesn't look self inflicted, the original circle from the butt of a cigarette radiating out slightly outward like someone literally pushed a lit cigarette into his chest until it went out. She kisses it as Jonathan slides into her and he lets out a shocked grunt. It's sweaty and passionate and over too quickly, it's everything a first time should be and Kali comes with tears in her eyes, still able to taste the scarred flesh on her tongue.

- ○ Jonathan drives her home and gives her his sweatshirt even though it's warm outside and stutters our a goodbye. She barely sits down on her bed before she's calling Nancy because she doesn't know what else to do.
- ○ Nancy's clearly with Steve and she hears them both on the phone. Nancy screams when she tells her and Kali's only halfway done describing what happened when there's a phone ringing in the background and she hears Steve go "Shit, it's Jonathan!"
- ○ Nothing really gets resolved over the phone and lunch the next day is awkward and Kali is totally content to let it be, her thigh pressing against Jonathan's cause she was too pussy to move but too pussy to move closer. Finally Nancy leans over and steals a grape off Kali's tray, "So when are we having a foursome?"
- ○ Dating Jonathan seems to have opened a whole new double dating scene, aka doing literally the exact same thing they'd been doing, but just now dating.
- ○ Kali feels she can do more now. She invites Jonathan and

Steve to her house if their parents are home or they can't go to Nancy's. They houseswap most nights, trying to avoid their fathers. It doesn't always work of course. Sometimes Mrs.Wheeler is being a bit neurotic. Will will be home alone. Kali's mom is going to physically drag her to the mosque. On those days either Steve or Jonathan or both are reluctant, antsy to go home. Steve mainly, on edge and mouthy, calls Nancy a bitch once. She just bites her lip until it bleeds and he calls her later crying and the next time she sees him she can't even touch him because he's been beat up so bad.

- Jonathan's had more black eyes than she can count, and sometimes when she pulls his shirt off he has bruises on his chest or hip, but no more serious injuries. Not even self inflicted. Kali traces over the scars and burn marks on his forearm sometimes. When they're in bed and she's laying on his chest and they have nothing but time and no one to blame except the universe. She wishes she could shed some layers and say something. Open up to him they way he doesn't have to because you can see every physical mark on his body. Kali doesn't scar. Some genetic mutation. Malfunction if you ask her. Her perfectly unmarred skin constantly begging the question- was any of it real?
- Things have changed at school, while Steve's popularity quickly dropped to zero, people stopped bullying Jonathan. It probably had to do with them viciously attacking anyone who dared say anything to him. Kali had punched a guy in the face, Steve had been punched and then proceeded to fight the other guy and Nancy had called everyone every name in the book so long as they listened. They were fiercely protective and the bullies had decided it just wasn't worth it.
- It's Steve and Nancy's anniversary and it's weird that Kali and Jonathan aren't with them. Jonathan insisted on giving them space, and so he and Kali are at his place getting high and watching a movie, waiting for their pizza. It's that awkward stage where it's nearing spring but it had snowed a few days earlier, the frost and snow still on the ground, so they're huddled in blankets in the

bedroom, Will fast asleep in the next room, when the door scares them. Jonathan's about to go off on the pizza guy for being so rude, he slips out of bed to grab the $20 Kali had given him for the pizza when the pounding gets more insistent. He gets a bit nervous but ultimately spots the baseball bat by the door and pulls it open. Steve and Nancy all but collapse in, Nancy literally falling to the floor. They're still in their nice clothes, Steve was taking her to that Italian restaurant in town so he's in dress pants and a button down baby blue shirt. It's stained with blood, he has a bloody nose and a couple buttons are popped, he's barefoot with just plain wool socks. Feet red and purple from the snow. Nancy's wearing Kali's leather jacket over a slinky gold dress, there's a huge black bruise forming on her cheek and her lower lip is busted. Her legs are pink, feet purple from the cold and completely bare, bleeding.

- "What the fuck happened?" Kali shouts. She's so, angry. She wants to kill them. Steve's father. Jonathan's father. Anyone who's ever hurt them. Nancy starts sobbing. Full on wailing, and Jonathan kneels in front of her, placing his hands on her arms, "it's going to be okay," she just shakes her head and he starts murmuring to her. Steve stands up and grabs Kali's hand, "lets get the first aid kit."
- Steve leads her to the kit and she sees blood seeping through the back of his shirt. When they get to the closet, she makes him take it off. He stands very still and she brushes the open shirt off his shoulders. He's been beaten with a belt, the lashes so severe skin had broken. There's three spots along his spine that look like they were made with the buckle. The same imprint on Nancy's cheek. She doesn't realize she's crying until she gets tears on Steve's shoulder, her face so close. "Don't you dare cry for me," he tries to say firmly, "I can't have my beautiful, badass girl crying for me," Kali nods against the back of his neck and Steve sighs, "I'm sorry." Kali just kisses his skin softly and they head back into the living room.
- Jonathan has his arms wrapped around Nancy, a blanket wrapped around her legs and Kali gives her a soft smile.

Nancy smiles back, cheek twitching and Kali takes a deep breath and tries to calm herself, “the kitchen?” She asks. Jonathan nods and helps Nancy to the kitchen, and she sits down, Steve next to her. They look worse under the fluorescent lights. Nancy looks too pale, face swollen and black and blue. Steve looks clammy, skin almost yellow tinted. Jonathan opens the first aid kit and they get started.

- Jonathan thinks he’s going to be sick. There’s a chunk of hair missing from Nancy’s head he realizes, as he pulls the sharp pins from her hair and it tumbled down her shoulders. He cleans her lip and applies antiseptic to the cut, even as she winces. He goes to get some ice for her cheek and looks inside her mouth to check on her gums and inside of her cheek and pales when he sees that her top left canine is chipped. She’d been shit so hard that her tooth broke off. The inside over her cheek is red like she’d bitten down and he leans back to take a deep breath. Nancy grabs his hand and squeezes, “it’s going to be okay.” He swallows the bile down and hands her a bag of ice while he goes to work on her feet. They’re bleeding and he cleans and bandages the cut, putting on several pairs of socks. He feeds her some Tylenol and makes her drink a small cup of water before he brings her to his room and gets her a change of clothes. She has no qualms about getting naked in front of him, pulling on his sweatpants and his mustard sweatshirt. Nancy smiles at him as best she can and he tries not to cringe at her chipped tooth. Perfect Nancy Wheeler looks a mess. Because of them. “My favorite sweater,” she says, pulling the sleeves over her hands. Jonathan nods, trying to give her a smile back.
- Steve and Jonathan have talked about it of course. Steve had showed up at Jonathan’s, drunk, one night. He’d told him everything. And he and Jonathan talked about how shitty they felt. How if they were real men they’d stand up for themselves. How Steve wouldn’t relish in Nancy taking care of him so much. Jonathan either. How Steve wouldn’t get so sick thinking about the future, without the three of them. How Jonathan wouldn’t need to be

high every time he was at home, like he was now. Then Steve had leaned over and kissed him. Tugged on his hair and slid his tongue into his mouth, Jonathan grasping his shoulders helplessly. It's not until Steve climbs onto him, and he sits on his lap that Jonathan pulls away, back stiffening, "I can't, I can't. I'm not a fag." And Steve moves off of him like he's been burned and is out the door before he can say anything.

- Kali can't exactly heal or take away pain, but she can control emotions, so as she touches Steve, she relaxes him. His back doesn't need stitches, just to be cleaned, and she loves as quickly as she can manage, cleaning the blood off his back, rinsing the red out of the rag several times. She's gentle, always making sure to keep a hand on him. She slides the antiseptic over each wound, before covering them with gauze and tape, his back a mess. She gives him some Tylenol and some ice for his eye. There's a cut on his jaw and she cleans it and he stares at her, eyes defeated, "She tried to stop him. She didn't even come in during it. Just when he hit me in the face. Because I was being a dick. I just kept pushing him, and he grabbed the belt again. She just wanted to stop him from hitting me and he didn't see her. He whipped his hand back and hit her in the face and then she wouldn't stop. And he just got mad and, slapped her, even though he'd already hit her. Who hits a woman like that? I just, it's my fault. I should have let her go a long time ago. I was being selfish, I," Kali shakes her head and kisses his forehead, "That's not true. Just relax. It's going to be okay." He shakes his head, "Did you see her face? It'll never be okay."
- Kali makes mugs of hot chocolate while Steve ices his face. Jonathan and Nancy never come out of the room and when the hot chocolate is done, they head into the room. Nancy's asleep, cheek pressed to Jonathan's chest. His hand is playing with her hair and the other is wrapped around her waist and he looks sheepish when Kali and Steve walk in, "She just fell asleep, I didn't know what to-" Kali cuts him off, shaking her head, "it's okay. It's good. She needs you." "She needs all of us,"

Jonathan says thickly.

- ○ Steve crawls in the bed next to Jonathan, purposefully avoiding looking at Nancy. Jonathan doesn't say anything as Steve curls against his back, pressing his forehead to Jonathan's shoulder. Kali sets the mugs down on the table, abandoning them, and goes to lay next to Nancy. She's shivering, despite being dressed, and Kali presses against her, tucking her face into Nancy's neck, placing a kiss there. Everything will be okay. Kali will make sure of it.
- ○ She doesn't know what she intends to do. She doesn't. Scare him a bit. But then he sees her there. Demands to know what she's doing. Laughs when she says she's Steve's friend. Claims that his son always has a lot of *bitches* wanting to help him. Laughs so nastily. Asks if she wants a real man. Not her son who's a pussy. Then laughs and asks, *isn't he fucking that white bitch that was here earlier? You his side piece? Maybe he's more of a man than I thought.* And she can't help it. His blood is on her hands before she can control herself. She's wearing gloves, it had been cold outside. It can be an accident. She knows how to make it an accident.
- ○ Lonnie's easy to find too. He's at the bar. It's easy to flirt and bring him outside. She leans in and tells him to close his eyes, pressing her body against his, and then she's holding her knife against his neck and telling him to get out of town. Telling him she knows what he does to his kids and she has no problem telling everyone he likes to fuck underage girls as well. He's scared under his hard exterior, as all abusers are. He begs for his pathetic life when she cuts him shallowly with the knife. She thinks about killing him. Slashing his throat. Painting her hands red with his blood. Surprisingly she thinks of Will in that moment, his voice curious as he had stated, "Your nose is bleeding." So she doesn't. She tells him to leave in a weeks time, she can't have him disappearing the same night as Steve's father. She tells him that if he touches anyone in that house in that span of time she will kill him instead. "I always keep my promises," she says, pressing the note tighter against his throat.

- It's been a long night and it feels like when she sneaks back into bed, curling around Nancy, it's only five minutes before she's being woken up. Thankfully Mrs.Byer's is already at work, and Will is at the table with Jonathan, and breakfast. Jonathan did too much honestly, made eggs, sausages and toast. Steve and Nancy all but limp to the table, looking even worse than the night before. Will doesn't say anything at all, shoveling his mouth with food. Jonathan sets a plate in front of Kali and leans down to kiss her softly. She kisses him back, and the phone starts ringing. Jonathan goes to answer it, eyebrow furrowing in confusion when he hands the phone to Steve, "It's for you."
- Steve gets up slowly and stands by the phone, listening intently. Finally he hangs up. Doesn't look at anyone but Nancy. "My father died last night." "What?!" She asks, jumping up, wincing at her feet. "Yeah. He was so drunk he fell over and hit his head on the corner of the table, broke it and never got up. My mom found him this morning." Kali hides her face behind her slice of toast, and Nancy wraps her arms around him and Steve kind of stands there. Jonathan meets his eyes and then Jonathan nods. Steve cradles Nancy's head softly, and presses a kiss to her forehead, "it's over." Nancy smiles at him, forgetting the pain in her cheek and her chipped tooth. The tooth is what does him in and he winces, closing his eyes, "it's over," he whispers to her, repeating the heavy words in his mouth.
- Since Mrs.Byers' doesn't care, they stay there. At least until Nancy's face goes down, and the funeral. The funeral is on Wednesday and the four of them dress silently. Nancy can't get into the dentist til the next week and Steve can hardly look at her. Kali can barely look at Steve, the scars that are gonna be on his back forever. The ones he's only showed her so far. Jonathan can't look at Kali, desperate to wrap his arms around Steve, kiss him again, tell him he knows what he's going through. He hasn't seen Lonnie in days, and though he's relieved, he's still anxious, on edge, he doesn't know how to fix it without touching him. And he can't. So they both

look at Nancy, her face still black and blue, cut covered by a soft pink lipstick. Tooth still chipped. Even as she tries to usher everyone together and take care of them. They arrive at the church early, and the host is waiting to allow them to see the body. Steve goes in with his mother. Holds her hand. Looks in the casket. His mother is sobbing. He doesn't know why. And he turns and walks to the bathroom. Quickly. Leans in the bowl and throws up.

- When he gets up, and exits the stall, Jonathan is there. He hands Steve a mini toothbrush and toothpaste kit and he raises an eyebrow, "Nancy," Jonathan says. Steve brushes his teeth. "I'm glad he's dead. I wish I would have killed him. I wish I was man enough to kill him." Jonathan nods, "I understand. Me more than anyone, I understand." Suddenly Steve's pulling him close by his suit jacket and kiss him fiercely. He tastes like mint and Jonathan runs his hands through Steve's soft hair and Steve slides his fingers in Jonathan's belt loops and kisses him until he can't breathe. He breaks away, sucking in huge gasps of breath, "Can we get out of here?"
- It's sunny for early spring. They get in Jonathan's car and Steve's got the pipe packed and is taking a hit before they're on the freeway. Nancy and Kali are in the back, begging Jonathan to roll down the windows as they slide their stockings off. Steve begs too, taking off his suit jacket and tie, unbuttoning a few buttons even though it ain't that damn warm. They make it to the river, the three passengers high, Jonathan quickly trying to catch up. Once they're all comfortably high, Kali resting her head on Nancy's shoulder, Nancy's feet on the console, Steve blurts out, "I kissed Jonathan and I wanna kiss Kali."
- The air seems thick and it's not just the leftover smoke either. He looks back at Nancy and Kali lifts her head off her shoulder slowly as Nancy bites her lip, "um, what does that mean?" Steve scratches his neck, "I like all of you. I want to be with all of you. It feels like we are already. It's always us four. Always has been." "But what does that make us?" Asks Jonathan, "some kind of

freaks?" Kali shakes her head, "It makes us *polyamorous*."

- "Polyamorous," Nancy says slowly, lips curling over the word, eyes low. "I mean, am I the only one who agrees?" Steve asks, voice trembling a bit. "No of course not. Steve I've been in love with since third grade, idiot!" Says Jonathan. "And I've been in love with Nancy since I saw her sucking on that damn ballet necklace," Kali says. Steve laughs, a beautiful sound, even though he still has a black eye, "polyamorous." And he leans up to kiss Jonathan, "I love you too," he whispers against his lips, before pressing his lips to Jonathan's.
- The two girls watch them kiss for a moment and then Nancy turns to Kali, "I guess it's our turn." Kali slides a hand under her jaw and tilts her head up, kissing her softly, slipping her tongue in her mouth and running it along the sharp edge of her broken tooth, it tastes like *freedom.*

Author's Note:

Descriptions of: cutting, eating disorder tendencies, burning someone with cigarettes, beating someone with a belt to leave welts and cuts, threatening someone with a knife, punching and hitting and leaving bruises, Nancy's tooth is broken.